Report of the Council

for the Year 2025

Introduction

2025 was a successful year for the Society with a full programme of events and publications. In common with other voluntary organisations, even now there still remains a sense that many people are hesitant to venture out in the aftermath of Covid, and the numbers attending some of our events have been lower than we might have wished. The annual conference and Geoff Brandwood Memorial Lecture are always informative and stimulating occasions, and it is always good to spend time with like-minded enthusiasts during the breaks and afterwards.

Visits

During 2025, four visits took place and were attended by the Society members and their guests.

London
On the morning of Saturday 26 April 2025, Paul Velluet, architectural historian, led a well-attended walking tour of churches in Kew. The tour included visits to The Barn Church (St Philip and All Saints), Atwood Avenue, St Anne's Church, Kew Green and Our Lady of Loreto and St Winefride, Leybourne Park. The tour was well attended. We were met by friendly, knowledgeable churchwardens at The Barn Church and St Anne's and, after a presentation of the churches' history by Paul Velluet and the churchwardens, we were able to wander around freely to take photos and ask questions. At St Anne's we were allowed access to the crypt behind the main altar, otherwise not open to the public. At Our Lady of Loreto, the parish priest joined us and discussed the role of the church in the local community today. All those attending seemed to have enjoyed themselves and a few of us joined Paul V for lunch after the event.

Liverpool
The visit to Liverpool on Friday 16 and Saturday 17 May was disappointing only in the number of attendees. On the Friday afternoon, we enjoyed a tour of the Metropolitan Cathedral led by the pro bono Curator of the Cathedral Treasury, Jack Leung. Jack was an excellent guide and was joined by the retired organist, who treated us to a description and rendition of the organ. Other highlights of the tour included access to parts of the crypt that are not often open to visitors, as well as a chance to see some unique artefacts, such as architectural drawings and bespoke commissions of church plate, old and new, that are in regular use in liturgical celebrations. Later that afternoon, those of us attending met at the Philharmonic Dining Rooms and had a very enjoyable supper together.

On the morning of Saturday 17 May, we met our guide, Richard MacDonald (Senior Regeneration Officer for Wigan Council and Blue Badge Guide), outside the Anglican Cathedral. The tour was comprehensive

and very enjoyable, including an examination of some of the most significant design and decorative features of the church, as well as a visit to the Lady Chapel.

York
Rob Andrews led a two-hour tour of medieval churches in York on Saturday 31 May. Sadly, the tour was not as well attended as in previous years. The focus of the visit was medieval stained glass and included the churches of All Saints North Street, St Denys, All Saints Pavement and Holy Trinity Goodramgate.

Oxford
An Oxford College Chapels Study Day on Saturday 19 July was organised and led by Mark Kirby. This was a sell-out event – very well attended and much appreciated.

For each college chapel, the presenters (Dr Mark Kirby at Lincoln, Prof Peregrine Horden at All Souls, Dr Geoffrey Tyack at Exeter and Harry Spain at Pusey House) began by providing an overview of the history of the chapel and then assessing the impact of social, economic and liturgical change on the fabric and the fixtures and fittings. The presenters fielded many questions from a very engaged and enthusiastic audience, and people were allowed to wander around to take photos and examine items of interest. Additionally at Pusey House, we were treated to a visit to the Library, where drawings and letters from the archive – pertinent to the design and construction of the chapel – had been set out for attendees to peruse.

Annual Conference

The 2025 conference was held at St James-the-Less, Pimlico, on 4 October on the subject of *The Twentieth-century Cathedral*. The conference looked at the phenomenon of the on-going building and designation of new cathedrals in the twentieth century by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. The expert speakers addressed a variety of stimulating questions.

- In an increasingly secular world, why was it thought necessary to build new cathedrals at all, and why were some newly built and others adapted from existing parish churches?
- For what kind of liturgy were the buildings designed, and how successful were they in their own terms?
- How do these cathedrals differ in their needs and design from medieval and Victorian notions?
- How were new designs arrived at? How and why were particular styles chosen? What was the role of architectural competitions?
- How do Roman Catholic cathedrals differ from Anglican ones?
- And finally, how are C20 cathedrals lasting the course? Do they still work? How suited are the older twentieth-century cathedrals for present-day liturgy, and how well, have they been adapted?

Rev Dr Allan Doig (fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and a historian of liturgy and church architecture) gave an overview of what drove the creation of new cathedrals in the twentieth century and the common themes between them.

Dr David Lewis (fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford, and a specialist in church architecture from the late nineteenth century onwards) spoke on Giles Gilbert Scott's enormous Liverpool Cathedral.

Prof Louise Campbell (University of Warwick, and an expert in architecture from late nineteenth century onwards and author of a number of books on Coventry Cathedral) spoke on Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral.

Andrew Derrick (Vice Chairman of the Society and architectural consultant, who has worked with a number of cathedrals) addressed the subject of Roman Catholic cathedrals in context, exploring the variety within this group of cathedrals and their characteristics.

Jon Wright (Senior Heritage Consultant with Purcell) talked about Frederick Gibberds Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, a building on which he has carried out much work in recent years.

Neil Burton (architectural historian and consultant) kindly gave a short talk on Portsmouth Cathedral, on which he has worked.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held online on 13 June. Members of the Society and the Council expressed their deep gratitude to the Right Revd Bishop David Stancliffe on his retirement as the Society's President after 15 years in that role, and elected him as President-emeritus and Vice-President. The Society is grateful to Bishop David for his deep understanding of liturgy and the architectural setting of church worship, on both of which he has published many times over the years. We were equally honoured to welcome the Revd. Prof Diarmaid MacCulloch, Kt., who was elected unanimously as the Society's new President. Prof MacCulloch is a distinguished historian and has been a Vice President of the Society since 2011. He has always been a strong advocate for the study of church architecture and furnishings, for what they can tell us about the history of the church and religion. Both Bishop David and Prof MacCulloch addressed the Society.

Lectures

The Annual Lecture took place immediately after the Society's AGM and was given by Prof John Cooper (University of York) on 'St Stephen's Chapel Westminster and the House of Commons, 1292-1950'. Prof Cooper's lecture drew upon his leadership of a three-year major research project between the University of York, the Palace of Westminster, the History of Parliament Trust, and the Institute of Historical Research, which explored every facet in the chapel's long and fascinating ecclesiastical and political history. The lecture was beautifully illustrated, including with some reconstructions of the interior of the medieval chapel.

The third **Geoff Brandwood Memorial Lecture** was held in person on 8th December 2025 at the church of St James-the-Less in Pimlico. Given by the Society's new President, Professor Sir Diarmaid MacCulloch, its theme was 'Pevsner and Me'. Charting his relationship with *The Buildings of England* series from childhood onwards, Prof MacCulloch's entertaining and (at times) challenging lecture was a considerable success, with 84 in attendance, including several 'Pevsner' authors. The lecture was followed by a convivial pre-Christmas reception with wine and mince pies.

Publications

The Society sends out four **e-Newsletters** during the course of the year, which are free to anyone who wishes to sign up. These newsletters advertise the Society's events, and draw attention to other matters of ecclesiological interest, including events organised by other societies. Members are very welcome to suggest items for inclusion. There are about 1,500 recipients, of whom approximately 500 are members of the Society.

In March 2025, we published volume 5 of the Society's conference proceedings, ***Stained Glass Revivals,*** comprising the papers from the society's conference held at St John's Waterloo in London in October 2023. It was edited by Mark Kirby and the papers were as follows: 'An Unexpected Revival: Stained Glass in the Early Seventeenth Century' by Mark Kirby; 'Two Gentlemen of Herefordshire and their Early Seventeenth-Century Stained Glass' by Robert Walker; 'What does Victorian Stained Glass Mean?' by Jim Cheshire; 'In search of artistic freedom: British stained glass in the nineteenth century' by Jasmine Allen; 'Revival in British Ecclesiastical Stained Glass 1930 – 1970' by Martin Crampin; and '"Allelujahs of many-coloured glass": a post-war revival or new directions?' by Diana Coulter.

Issue 64 of ***Ecclesiology Today*** was prepared for publication, to be dispatched to members in early 2026. It contained articles on a variety of topics: 'Designing Anglican Churches in Europe: British Architects, Local Architects, or Both?' by James Bettley; 'An English Church in Switzerland: the "Tin Tabernacle" of Roveredo' by Diane Conrad-Daubrah; 'The Jewel in the Crown: 550 Years of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle' by Janet Gough; and 'Journeys in Sacred Space' by Adrian Daffern. The book review section contained reviews of ten new books on ecclesiological and related subjects.

Only one edition of Church Crawler was published in 2025. As well as the usual news items, the Spring/Summer edition had an article written by Marie Clausén, describing a visit to Instead church in Norfolk and the feelings and thoughts which were evoked. Marie provided the photos as well. Members were written to about the future of Church Crawler and the decision to move to a digital format. Members were given the option to pay a small extra fee to continue to receive a paper version. It was hoped to get the next edition out to members before the end of the year but there were unforeseen issues which meant this was not possible. Hopefully everyone will have received their paper or digital copy well before the AGM. Incidentally, any members who have ideas for a feature or article that they would like to see in a future Church Crawler should contact the editor, Phil Draper.

Social media and the website

Following the approval of Graham White's prototype simplified and more easily editable website, this was launched in February 2025. Over the last 12 months it attracted 7,114 unique visitors. The top pages visited were:

- Home page: 4,256
- Downloads & publications: 1,569
- Events: 1,467
- Annual conference 2025: 1,184
- Join us: 716
- Find out about us: 648
- Our history: 472

all significantly higher than last year

Social media stats:

- Twitter/X 1,631 followers (since 2013)
- Facebook: 979 followers (since 2019)
- LinkedIn: 244 followers (since 2022)
- Bsky.social: 51 followers (since 2024)

also significantly higher than last year

Finances

The draft accounts for 2025 have been posted on the Society's website here:
https://www.ecclsoc.org.uk/annual-reports

Membership Report 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025

By 31 December 2025, 500 members had set up a direct-debit mandate for their annual subscriptions.

Membership

On 31 December 2025, the Society's membership of 807 members was made up of:

Active/paid	700
Suspended - Non-payment	28
Suspended - Mail returned	5
Suspended - Incorrect payment	74
Standard	400
Concessions/retired/student	297
Life members	80

Corporate members	10
Overseas members	12
Honorary	8
South East	170
London	129
South West	119
East of England	111
Yorkshire & Humber	83
West Midlands	49
East Midlands	34
North West	37
Wales	25
Scotland	18
North East	17
Outside UK	13
Northern Ireland	2

Between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025, the society welcomed 31 new members. 61 members left the Society.

New members*

Ms Rachel Sycamore
Mr Michael Freeman Adv.Dip (Cantab) BSc (Hons), MSc, MIBIOL, MA, MBCS, MBA, MSt (Oxon)
Mr Philip Pankhurst
Ms Róisin Nic Cóil MSCSI MRICS
Ms Susan Holgate
Dr Christopher Clifford
Dr Gary Lewis
Ms Zia Simpson
Mr Gavin Glasby
Mr Neil Lyon FSA
Ms Susan Fielding FSA
Mr William Schenck
Mr James Hellyer
Revd. Philip Macaulay
Mr Neil G Smith BA FRSA FRAI FSAScot MRHistS
Fr. Michael Maine
Mr Neil Burton BA Dip Hist Art FSA IHBC
Dr Stephen Damment BSc, MSc, PhD, Dip RCPath
Mr Dan Jameson
Mr Harry Foley
The Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales
Dr David Edgar
Mr Andrew Newcombe
Mrs Caroline Shaw
Prof Stephen Taylor
Mr Paul Craven
Dr James Thallon
Mrs Elizabeth McGrath MA (Hons) GDip MA
Dr Helen Jeffries
Mrs Elizabeth Stazicker MA (Oxon), Dipl Archive Admin, FRSA

*1 new member has opted not to have their details published.

Leavers

Of those who left, 29 resigned their membership and 11 were removed for non-payment or with whom we have lost contact.

We were sorry to hear of the passing of the following members:

Mr M. S. Potts
Dr R. J. Busby FCLIP, FSA
Mr Ian Watt
Mr Leonard Lanigan
Miss Ann Hilder
Mr M. T. Vetterlein
Revd A. Elizabeth Lee
Preb. Patrick Tuft MA
Revd. Victor Story
Mr Patrick Littlejohns
Mr Michael Clews
Revd. D. L. Cawley AKC FSA
Dr Martin Barnes
Miss A Ward
Mr K. H. G. MacLean
Mr J. C. Yule
Mr D. F. Keeling
Mr K. V. Richardson
Prof James Stevens Curl FSA MRIA FRIAS
Mrs Grace McCombie
Mr David Stazicker

Volunteers and Council members

This year, we said goodbye to two long-serving members of Council: Anthony Gilmour, who has been Treasurer for 11 years, and Paul Barnwell, whose rich store of wisdom has benefited Council meetings for 20 years. We also welcomed Zia Simpson, whose management of the newsletter and its redesign has been tremendously impressive. Zia was elected to the Council at the Annual General Meeting.

The Council would particularly like to thank Mark Ockelton for inspecting the Society's accounts, and Sam Hills for managing the process of printing and posting our publications.

Details of the Society

The Ecclesiological Society is a registered charity, number 210501.
Registered address: c/o the Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V OHS. General correspondence should be sent to: Flat 1, 6 Akerman Road, London SW9 6SW.
Email: secretary@ecclsoc.org.uk

Website: www.ecclsoc.org.uk

The Laws of the Society describe its aims and how it is governed. They were last modified and approved by the AGM of 15 May 2023. The Society's affairs are administered by a Council, and the Laws describe how members are elected by the membership onto the Council or are co-opted onto that body.

Meeting four times a year (either in central London or on Zoom), the Council has transacted a variety of business in pursuance of the aims of the Society. In exercising its duties, it has taken due regard of the guidance published by the Charity Commission, including guidance on public benefit. In the last year we have met at the Chapter House of St Paul's Cathedral, and the Council is grateful to the Dean and Chapter for allowing use of their premises in this way.

Members of Council are the trustees of the charity, and at the end of 2025 they were as follows: Nick Chapple, Frances Cook, Andrew Derrick, Phil Draper, Paul Gray, Dr Mark Kirby, Becky Payne, Fiona Rosen, Zia Simpson, Dr Christopher Webster, and Graham White.

April 2026